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The CIA. Part IV

An absolute requisite to any organization such as the CIA is that thing called esprit de corps: pride, enthusiasm, devotion and jealous regard for the honor of the group. The Marines have it. The FBI has it. In the CIA it is almost totally lacking.

Two men are primarily responsible for this situation. Both were Presidents of the United States.

The first was Harry S. Truman. He appointed the man who is considered by most observers (and CIA employees) to have been the best man ever to head the agency, Vice Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter—and then refused to back him up. Most readers of these lines will think immediately of Truman's dismissal of General MacArthur at the height of the Korean War. But it may be that his replacement of Hillenkoetter was more disastrous, historically. Admiral Hillenkoetter was appointed Director of the CIA in May, 1947. He was a professional intelligence officer, ran a tight ship, and a good one. President Truman left guidance of the CIA to the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State. In practice that meant that George Kennan, John Paton Davies, Jr., and Harlan Cleveland gave the orders. There came the inevitable showdown, and Truman sided with the State Department. In 1950, Hillenkoetter was replaced by General Walter Bedell Smith, who bent to the State Department's will. A number of top CIA ca-

reer officers departed when Hillenkoetter did. Agency morale never recovered.

The second blow was administered by John F. Kennedy. It is the record that one of the CIA's most brilliant achievements was the overthrow of the Communist government of Guatemala. The man who engineered it was Whiting Willauer, one of America's authentic heroes — and CIA's: Princeton, B. S., cum laude, 1928; top ten percent, Harvard Law School, 1931; varsity football and lacrosse; multi-engine aircraft pilot; fluent in Spanish, French, German, Chinese; coordinator of Admiral Byrd's second Antarctic expedition; special assistant Attorney General of the U. S.; assistant to Gen. Chennault in formation of the Flying Tigers; special representative of the US in the Philippines; Ambassador to Honduras and to Costa Rica. In the final months of his administration, President Eisenhower chose Whiting Willauer to plan and organize the invasion of Cuba, a salute to his earlier success in Guatemala.

John F. Kennedy relieved him, without explanation, discussion or common courtesy.

The Bay of Pigs tragedy followed. But CIA morale had died months earlier.

Hillenkoetter and Willauer were the two most - respected professionals in CIA's 20-year history. Each was shabbily dismissed.